

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1901.

*NATIVE RACES AS IMPERIAL PROBLEMS.*

*The Natives of South Africa; Their Economic and Social Condition.* Edited by the South African Native Races Committee. Pp. xv + 360. (London: John Murray, 1901.) Price 12s. net.

BY far the most serious of all the questions confronting us in South Africa is the question of the native races. The reason is not far to seek. Two at least of the African races are endowed with extraordinary vitality. The Australian aborigines are a people which will neither thrive in the presence of the white man nor be absorbed into his hosts. They are, therefore, bound to die out in the presence of civilisation, and, however much we may regret it from philanthropic or scientific motives, the political and social problems involved will sooner or later cease to exist. It is otherwise with the Negroes and the Bantu. These two prolific races show no signs of decay when brought in contact with civilisation. On the contrary, their intestine wars and savage practices being put an end to, they increase rapidly in number.

The Negro is not found in South Africa. There the bulk of the native population is Bantu. The remains of the earlier peoples, Vaalpens, Bushmen and Hottentots, are (save the last named) of no political importance. They are, indeed, of considerable scientific interest. The Vaalpens, a black pigmy race dwelling in caves and holes in the Northern Transvaal and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, have never yet been subjected to scientific investigation. They are said to practice cannibalism, and to be the true aborigines. The Bushmen, of larger, though for the most part still diminutive, stature, are, like them, savages of a low type. They display, it is true, some advance on the Vaalpens, and are specially noted for their extraordinary skill in drawing. They are of a yellowish-brown colour. In this and some other physical characteristics they resemble the Hottentots, who, it has been conjectured, are the result of a mixture in blood of the earliest Bantu immigrants with the Bushmen. For the most part the Hottentots have come under the influence of civilisation, though there are communities of them still practising their own customs. The Bushmen are hunters. They have hardly yet taken the first step towards civilisation, in the shape either of agriculture or of herdsmanhip. The Hottentots, on the other hand, are a pastoral people, while the Bantu in all their branches both keep cattle and are acquainted with rudimentary agriculture.

The Bantu are divided by Prof. Keane into three groups. The first consists of the Zulus and the tribes connected with them, such as the Ama-Xosa, the Matabele and the Kafirs. The second consists of the principal inhabitants of the Orange River Colony, the Transvaal, Basutoland and Bechuanaland, namely, the Basuto and Bechuana. The third includes the Amatonga, the Swazis, the Fingoes, the Mashona, Makalaka and other tribes, representing, according to Prof. Keane, "the first wave of Bantu immigration." This of course assumes that the Hottentots are not to be credited with Bantu blood, but are an offshoot of some other African stock.

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In consequence of their overwhelming political and social importance, the work before us, though bearing a wider title, relates almost entirely to the Bantu. It is in substance a plea for a full official inquiry into the circumstances of the native races, with a view to framing a sound policy in dealing with them. We are first presented with a short account of the various peoples which, though taken from the best sources, shows very clearly how defective our knowledge is. In this account an estimate of the populations and a general outline of native laws and customs are included. We are next told on what terms we hold the different provinces of British South Africa. This is important, because our titles to all the provinces are not the same. The most extreme advocate of the right of the white man to the lordship of the world would probably admit there was a distinction to be drawn between cases in which we hold by right of conquest, either directly from the natives themselves or from those who had conquered them, and cases in which we simply administer the country by invitation of the natives. In the latter it is evident that every principle of justice requires us to treat the land as still their property and, regarding them as the true owners of the country, to administer it for their benefit.

These preliminary matters, necessary for the understanding, or at least for the setting in proper perspective, of what follows, having been disposed of, we approach the main subject of the book—the relations of the native population to their white rulers and to the white colonists in general. They are considered under the heads of (1) land tenure; (2) labour supply, occupations and wages; (3) the law of master and servant; (4) the compound system; (5) savings banks and labour agencies; (6) the pass laws; (7) education; (8) taxation; (9) franchise; and (10) the sale and supply of intoxicating liquors. It is not my intention to follow the writers in their review of these matters. Deeply interesting as they are, their interest is rather political and philanthropic than scientific, and so far it is foreign to this journal. It must suffice here to say that these chapters have been compiled with care from information supplied largely at first hand by correspondents (of whom a list is given) and by official and other documents; they are marked by sanity and moderation, and are written with the object, not of dogmatising on questions bristling with difficulty, but of collecting and presenting information.

The importance as well as the difficulty of the problems involved is evident. The total native population is estimated by the editors at about five times the numerical strength of that of the whites, and it is rapidly increasing. The natives are not allowed to indulge as they once did in intertribal wars, which would not only give them occupation but keep down their numbers. They are not at present fit for continuous labour. The habit of work is a growth of civilisation, and cannot be imposed as you put a coat of paint on a door. Generations are required to raise a people from savagery. It is no wonder, therefore, that the increase of their numbers and their idleness are sources of anxiety to the intrusive colonists. Various expedients have been tried. The Boer policy was first massacre, then slavery, cruelty and oppression. Nor have our own people always been guiltless in this respect. The results have been lamentable alike to the natives and

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to the Europeans. With the abolition of slavery a more humane policy on the part of the Government was inaugurated. But neither the Home Government nor the Colonial Governments have been invariably wise or consistent. Though on the whole their efforts have been honestly directed to the benefit of the natives, the conflicting interests of natives and colonists have often caused, and still cause, grave difficulties. The experiment has been made in Cape Colony and, to a more limited extent, in Natal, where the native question is more acute, of admitting natives who fulfil certain stringent conditions to the franchise. The numbers admitted are not yet large, but it is obvious that the principle thus introduced may involve consequences which cannot at present be foreseen.

Accordingly, the editors are abundantly justified in their belief that the time is opportune to consider our policy towards the native races throughout British South Africa. The information elicited by their inquiries is not exhaustive; it is only preliminary. One of the chief results has been the discovery how little we know about the natives and their needs. This is a point which the editors press again and again. In August last they presented a memorial to H. M. Secretary of State for the Colonies, urging the expediency of inquiries on the laws, customs, land tenure and tribal system of the natives, and on the other points dealt with in these pages. At that very time, as the readers of NATURE know, the Anthropological Institute and the Folklore Society were independently presenting a joint memorial making a similar request. The history of Christian missions, the history of every attempt by Europeans to rule a savage or barbarous people, is full of failures and bloodshed attributable to imperfect comprehension of native customs and ways of thought. So long as the missionary societies and the Colonial Office agree in ignoring the necessity of anthropological studies these failures will be repeated. In 1881, however, the Cape Government awoke to the desirability of ascertaining and recording some facts concerning native customs. A Commission was appointed, and its Report is, so far as it goes, an extremely valuable document. "There is urgent need," say the editors of the present volume, "of a similar inquiry covering the other territories of South Africa under British rule." When this protracted war has ended we shall have to make new laws in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony to control the relations of the black men to the white, and of the black amongst themselves. We cannot legislate without first knowing the existing facts. A Commission of Inquiry would therefore seem inevitable. If it be determined on, it is to be hoped that scientific assistance will be called in, with a view to rendering the results complete and trustworthy, and, further, that it will be found possible to extend the area of its inquisition to Bechuanaland and to Rhodesia. That such an inquiry, if adequate in scope and properly directed, will incidentally be of high value to various departments of science (notably, but not exclusively, to anthropology) is an additional reason for the appointment of the Commission. In the pages of "The Natives of South Africa" scientific considerations are not adduced; but even without them the book is a powerful plea for inquiry, and one which may be heartily commended to all who are interested in the serious questions it presents for solution.

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The Committee have given an interesting and useful appendix of selections from their correspondents' replies, and three maps showing the distribution of population in Cape Colony and Natal. Quite as necessary as either of these maps is one or more showing the locations of the different tribes in all the territories. These should have been given. Many of the tribes can certainly be located. If all cannot be, the defects would have been a striking illustration of the state of our ignorance.

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#### PROGRESS IN THE COMING CENTURY.

*Twentieth Century Inventions: a Forecast.* By George Sutherland, M.A. Pp. xvi+286. (London: Longmans and Co., 1901.) Price 4s. 6d. net.

THE rôle of prophet of the industrial development or the discoveries of science is one not lightly to be assumed, especially if it is the aim of the prophecy to cover so long a period as a hundred years. Mr. Sutherland has, nevertheless, had the temerity to attempt this task, and to approach it in the spirit of the man of science deducing logical conclusions from definite data rather than in that of the writer of fiction giving free rein to his imagination. We are not sure whether, when a century is concerned, the imaginative method, if kept within proper bounds, is not almost as satisfactory as the other. The predictions of the novelist are often fantastic and wild; but if he is likely to overshoot the bounds of probability his more cautious brother prophet is almost certain to fall short of them. The system of the logical prophet has, indeed, an inherent defect—it can only foretell the development and further application of knowledge that has already been acquired, and cannot take into consideration the possibility of the discovery of new facts. Yet it is by discovery as much as by invention, if we may draw a distinction between the two, that progress has taken place in the past, and it is to be hoped, for the sake of science, that the same will be true in the future. No prophet writing in 1801 on the same lines as Mr. Sutherland could have foretold the present development of electric traction, for he could not have foreseen the discovery of electro-magnetic induction made by Faraday thirty years later. He might, however, have predicted the modern railway systems, because the essential principles of these systems were already known. It would be easy to multiply instances, but we think it is evident from what we have said that Mr. Sutherland's prophecy must in some respects fall short of the truth, unless, indeed, the coming century is to be devoid of discoveries.

But if Mr. Sutherland's system is open to objection on the grounds that have been stated above, it has also much to recommend it. It would be idle to devote time to the serious consideration of extravagant predictions of the purely imaginative writer whose prophecies must be judged by their consistency and their power to interest. With the forecast in the book before us it is different; it is well considered and carefully thought out, and affords material for thoughtful, and very possibly useful, reflection. It is of interest to all those who are engaged in helping onward modern industrial development to pause occasionally and look somewhat far ahead to see in what direction that development is tending. Those who wish